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Alva and the Filed, 1944

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L.S. McKee

Alva and the Field, 1944

Thunder gathered at the cloud line as we
ducked beneath barbed wired fences. Metal
ribbons grazing dust from our skin. We wandered

through property boundaries, waded through grass
grown wild, saplings catapulting from our shins
as we stomped towards the woods. In my heart,

worry rattled like a rusted bell. He was leaving
to join the Army. To shoot
them Kaiser boys right through the windows

of their brains. A thing he liked to say
though it made no sense. I knew he imagined
they'd drop like bottles. How glass shattered

under the gaze of his shotgun.
He kicked at a shrub of mountain laurel;
black-throated wrens boiled up from its branches.

You bleeding, he said, pointing at
my elbow where barbed wire had caught
the skin. Anthills puckered in the dirt,

and as we walked, he razed them with the blade
of his heel. *Ain't nobody a better shot*
than me, he said, scrunching his eye shut

and snatching up his arms like a gun.
They won't see me coming, he said, laughing
so hard I knew he was afraid.